1: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Lithuania

mission to send a delegate, had made a new official declaration of Lithuanian independence on February 16, 1918, this time on the basis of the original Vilna resolutions of September 1917, with a renewed demand for a Constituent Assembly.

The German General Staff now conceived the idea of a personal union of Lithuania with Saxony, under a monarchical government. In order to thwart this plan, and under pressure from the clerical party in Germany, the *Taryba*, on June 14, 1918, invited the Catholic Duke William of Urach—alleged to be a Württemberg descendant of the old Lithuanian king Mindaugas—to ascend the throne of an independent Lithuania as Mindaugas II. The invitation was accepted, in spite of the strong opposition of a section of the *Taryba* itself, not to mention that of the German General Staff. But, with military defeat growing daily more certain, the latter's authority was beginning to wane, and on October 20 the new Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, informed the *Taryba* that it had been decided to delegate full legislative and administrative power to a Lithuanian Government, as soon as it should be constituted, and to remove the German occupying forces as soon as possible. The *Taryba*, therefore, on November 2, withdrew the invitation to the Duke of Urach, leaving the form of government to be decided by the future Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, constituting itself as the legislative body, it elected a triumvirate, consisting of MM. Smetona, Staugaitis, and Šilingas, who on November 5 invited M. Voldemaras to form a non-party Cabinet and to negotiate with the various nationalities.

3. The German Evacuation and the Bolshevik Invasion

As soon as the Armistice of November 11, 1918, was signed, the leaders in each country set about the task of organizing their respective administrations, consolidating the political independence of the new Governments, and finally drafting constitutions.

The Estonian National Council met on November 20, 1918, after nine months' rustication; M. Pæts was released from imprisonment, and the Government set up under him on February 24 was confirmed in its authority.

In Latvia, M. Karl Ulmanis's democratic *bloc* was now joined by the members of the Latvian Refugees' Committee and of the Latvian National Council from Petrograd, and an all-Latvian Council of State was formed of some 100 members of all parties, except the Social-Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks.[1] The Assembly met at Riga on November 18, 1918, elected M. Čakste as its president, and formed

[1] About two-thirds of the seats, which were allotted according to the votes received by these parties in the elections under the Provisional Government, were held by peasants and workers, while the remaining third of the members were merchants, manufacturers, and representatives of the national minorities.

642 a Provisional Government with M. Ulmanis as Prime Minister and
●646 M. Meierovics as Foreign Minister, pending the convocation of a Constituent Assembly.

642 In Lithuania, M. Sleževičius became Prime Minister in the Cabinet formed in November 1918 by M. Voldemaras, when the latter left to attend the Peace Conference in Paris. A provisional National Assembly, the 200 members of which were chosen by mass meetings all over the country, met in Kaunas (Kovno)[1] from January 17 to 23, 1919, to draft a republican constitution and to re-elect and expand the *Taryba*; M. Smetona was elected President of the State on April 4.

728 Before the constitutions could be drafted, however, the new
648 Provisional Governments had to concentrate their whole energies on the military situation brought about by the Armistice of November 1918. The Armistice Convention had provided that the German troops were to evacuate all territories which were formerly a part of the Russian Empire 'as soon as the Allies shall consider this desirable, having regard to the interior conditions of those territories' (Article 12), and were to 'cease at once all requisitions, seizures, or coercive measures for obtaining supplies intended for Germany in . . . Russia' (Article 14). It was the intention of the Allies that the German forces should do their utmost to stem the Bolshevik advance, and that, when their services were no longer needed, they should withdraw from the Baltic Provinces without reaping any political reward for their efforts. This was clearly too much to expect, and the Germans, by withdrawing rapidly and without permission in November 1918, and by removing all supplies of arms, food, and even rolling-stock as they went, in violation of Article 14, not only facilitated the Bolshevik invasion, but did their best to put the new Baltic Governments in the position of having to turn to them for assistance.

648 At the end of November the Red Armies had begun to penetrate
721 into Estonia from Narva and the Finnish coast; on January 5, 1919, they were in Vilna, and the Lithuanian Government had retired to Kaunas, while the Latvian Government had been driven from Riga to take refuge at Liepāja (Libau). By the end of February the Bolsheviks had overrun Latvia and a large part of Lithuania.

[723] In Estonia, General Laidoner and Captain Pitka organized an army and marine force from the remnants of the Estonian regiments of 1917, and—with the aid of Finnish loans and volunteers, gifts of ammunition and foodstuffs from Great Britain, and the occasional presence of British warships in Tallinn (Reval) and Liepāja under Admiral Sinclair—put up a heroic resistance, and by the beginning of February 1919 had temporarily cleared the country.

[1] Vilna was then occupied by the Bolsheviks.

[142] under M. Otto Strandman. A provisional Constitution adopted on June 4 was replaced, a year later, by the definitive Constitution of June 15, 1920.

●[146] In Latvia, where the Provisional Government was even more hampered than its counterpart in Estonia by the struggle with the German and Bolshevik armies,[1] elections to the Constituent Assembly were not held until April 1920. M. Čakste was elected President of the Assembly, which consisted of peasants, Socialists, and members of the other bourgeois parties (including the minorities), in roughly [145] equal proportions. After the adoption of a provisional Constitution on June 1, the Ulmanis Cabinet resigned and was reconstituted with the support of all except the Socialists; but M. Ulmanis gradually lost the support of most of the Left parties, and was eventually succeeded by M. Meierovics, who formed a coalition Government including the Agrarians, Democrats, and some of the Social-Democrats. The definitive Constitution was adopted on February 15, 1922. The first constitutional Parliament, or *Saeima*, met on November 7, 1922, and elected Čakste as President of the State.[2]

In Lithuania elections were held in April 1920 for the Constituent Assembly, which met at Kaunas on May 15, ratified the proclamation of independence, and proceeded to the elaboration of a provisional constitution and the appointment of a new government—the *Taryba* and the Cabinet having resigned. M. Stulginskis, the President of the Constituent Assembly, was chosen to act as temporary President of the Republic, and Dr. Grinius formed a Cabinet on June 8. The final Constitution was not promulgated until August 1, 1922.

III. INTERNAL CONSOLIDATION IN THE SUCCESSION STATES

178 To appreciate the complexity and wide range of the problems 727 demanding the immediate attention of the new Governments in the early days of independence, it is necessary to picture the devastating effects of the six years of military campaigns, occupations, and invasions through which the Baltic Provinces had just passed, the complete collapse of economic life, the break-down of administrative machinery, and the wastage of material and of man-power which they brought in their train. Everything had to be built up from the very beginning; not only new constitutions, but new law-courts, new schools, and new central and local government bodies had to be set up; and every activity was hampered by the relative inexperience of leaders who up till now had always been in opposition, and by the virtual disappearance of the former Russian and German official classes.

[1] See above, p. 25.

[2] Čakste was re-elected President in 1925, and held office until his death in 1927.

646 The Legislature consisted in each case, largely for reasons of economy, of a single chamber, elected for a three-year term on a very wide franchise;[1] extraordinary sessions might be convened at the request of a specified proportion of its members, of the Government (in Estonia and Latvia), or of the President (in Latvia and Lithuania).

643 In Estonia the Head of the State was the Prime Minister of the day—here again, apparently, from motives of economy; thus every change of government involved a change of President. In Latvia and Lithuania the President was elected for a three-year term[2] by the Legislature, which could recall him by a two-thirds vote, and also institute criminal proceedings against him. In Lithuania he could dissolve the *Seimas*, but in that case his own continuance in office depended on re-election by the next *Seimas*; similarly, the Latvian President could submit a proposal for the dissolution of the *Saeima* to a referendum, but if it was rejected he must himself resign. In both countries the President had the right to initiate legislation, or to return laws adopted by the Legislature (with the exception, in Lithuania, of those declared urgent by a two-thirds majority) for reconsideration; this veto could be overridden, however, by an ordinary majority in Latvia, and by a majority of the total number of deputies in Lithuania.

645 The Cabinet was responsible individually and collectively to the Legislature, and dependent on its vote of confidence; but, while in Latvia and Lithuania the Prime Minister was appointed by the President (himself selecting the other Ministers), and in Lithuania could be dismissed by him, in Estonia (where there was no President) the *Riigikogu* was supposed to elect each Minister individually.[3] All acts of the President, who was not politically responsible, had to be countersigned by a Minister; in Latvia, the appointment of the Prime Minister and proposals to dissolve the *Saeima* were exceptions to this rule.

642 By these provisions it was hoped to establish an elaborate counterpoise between the Legislative and Executive functions. Equally complicated measures were taken to preserve the control of the electorate over both. Apart from the usual 'bill of rights', these consisted chiefly of the popular initiative and the referendum.

[1] Citizens of both sexes who had reached the age of 20 in Estonia, and 21 in Latvia and Lithuania, were eligible to vote on a basis of direct, equal, universal, and secret suffrage, and of proportional representation. The number of deputies was fixed at 100 in the Estonian *Riigikogu* and the Latvian *Saeima*, and at 78 in the Lithuanian *Seimas*.

[2] The same person could not be elected for more than two consecutive terms.

[3] In practice, however, the function of President came to be exercised, during Cabinet crises, by the Speaker, who invited some one to form a government; after inter-party agreement, the new Prime Minister produced a list of Ministers which was accepted as a whole by the *Riigikogu*.

[2. in Constitutions after W.W.I -- 42 Analyst]

642 661 leaders (not including General Larka) were arrested.[1] The presidential and parliamentary elections were postponed until the end of the state of emergency, which was itself prolonged in September for another year.

642 Some attempt to adhere to constitutional procedure was made, however, in October 1934, when an extraordinary session of the *Riigikogu* was summoned; but, in view of the recalcitrant attitude of the majority of the representatives, it was immediately prorogued, and in January 1935 President Paets announced the Government's [478] intention of replacing the new Constitution by a system of corporative representation. A beginning was made in the following March with the creation of an Economic Council, ten of whose members were to be appointed by the President, while the remaining fifteen [665] would be elected by the Chambers of Commerce. At the same time the single-party system was introduced, with the foundation of a Patriotic party under the direction of the Chief of Propaganda. ●646 Finally, on January 8, 1936, a Bill empowering the Government to summon a Constituent Assembly was submitted to a referendum and approved by 474,218 votes to 148,824. This Bill provided that the Assembly, which was to adhere to republican and democratic principles, should consist of two Chambers: the first composed of eighty members elected by direct, universal, equal, and secret suffrage on the principle of personal election; the second of forty members, ten of whom would be appointed by the President and the remainder by the various public bodies.[2]

While the results of the elections to this Assembly, which were held in December 1936, have not been published, it is understood that little more than half the electorate voted, and that in fifty of the eighty constituencies only one candidate was presented for election, while, although some Opposition leaders were returned in the remaining thirty, even here the majority of seats fell to Government nominees. Moreover, the restrictive precautions taken during the electoral campaign were such as to evoke a manifesto in the Finnish press by four former party leaders, MM. Tõnisson, Piip, Kukk, and Teemant.

642 The National Assembly met on February 18, 1937, and was dissolved on August 17, after adopting the final draft of the constitutional law presented for their consideration by the Government. Its main provisions are as follows:

642 646 The President is elected for six years, by direct, universal, and secret suffrage; the National Assembly consists of a Chamber of

[1] An attempted *coup* planned by the Liberators in December 1935 was forestalled by the arrest of General Larka and other leaders, and was punished by the infliction of severe sentences on some 148 prisoners, in May 1936. About half of the latter, including General Larka, have since been amnestied.

[2] e.g. by the Courts of Justice, local government bodies, corporations, churches, cultural boards of minorities, the Civil Guard, &c.

Deputies and a National Council, the first being composed of 48 members elected by secret and universal suffrage on the basis of majority voting, and the second of 40 members—10 of whom are nominees of the President, and the remaining 30 representatives of the corporations, municipalities, and public institutions; the age qualification of voters is 22 years, of deputies 25 years, and of members of the National Council 40 years. The right to initiate legislation belongs to the Government with the President's cognizance, or to one-fifth of the Chamber of Deputies; measures relating to national defence, however, can only be proposed by the Government, while their consent is necessary for the introduction of fiscal measures by the Chamber of Deputies. Legislation rejected by the National Council requires for its option a three-fifths majority vote of the total number of deputies in the first Chamber. The President has the right of dissolution and suspensive veto, and the power to govern by decree between parliamentary sessions; he appoints and dismisses the Government, and, in the event of a vote of no confidence by the Chamber of Deputies, he may either dismiss the Government or order new elections; his acts must be countersigned by the Prime Minister and the competent Minister, and he may be impeached before the State Court; with the consent of the Chamber of Deputies he can submit any measure to a national referendum. Constitutional amendments may be proposed either by the President or by a majority of either of the two Chambers, and, in the event of the National Assembly's rejection of such a proposal made by the President, the latter may submit it to a referendum. Provision is made for legislation setting up autonomous professional corporations; freedom of conscience and religion are guaranteed, and there is no State Church; national minorities are permitted to establish autonomous institutions for cultural purposes and social assistance; instruction in their schools is to be conducted in their own language and in that of the State. The Constitution came into force on January 1, 1938, and elections to the new Chamber of Deputies took place on February 24–5, when the Patriotic Front gained fifty-five out of the eighty seats. No other parties were permitted, but several of the former party leaders, including MM. Piip and Tõnisson, were returned. On April 24, 1938, M. Paets, by 219 votes to 19, was elected the first State President under the new Constitution.

[642] [646] [643] [645]

3. Latvia

Political Parties. Five main groups are shown in the table below:[1] the Agrarians; the Right, Centre, and National Minority groups, one

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[1] See Table 9 on next page.